

DAAD Summer School
“Dialogue on Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis”

REPRODUCTION OF VESUVIAN VILLAS: THE GETTY MUSEUM

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ABSTRACT

The article has the intent to give some information, depth more or less as the case, about five historical reproductions of Vesuvian villas. Will be described briefly the Pompejaneum of Ashaffenburg, the Crystal Palace in London, the Maison Pompeienne in Paris and the Pompeia Saratoga in New York. Consequently, in a deepest way, will be described the Getty Villa in Malibù, successful example of museum in which artefacts (originals and copies) and architectural structure complement together each other and recall the past, distant in time and space.

Keywords: Getty Villa, reproduction, roman villa.

ABOUT THE AUTOR

Federica Obinu has studied Cultural Heritage at the University of Cagliari, taken the degree with which she has been able to access to the Archaeology studies at the University of Pisa. Several have been her experiences in archaeological excavation, which had comprehended prehistorical, classical and medieval environments. But her main aspiration is studying and analyze the roman history, deepening the architecture field.

1. INTRODUCTION

79 b.C. : seventeen years after a strong earthquake that shook physically and mentally the populations who lived in the Vesuvian area, the volcano erupted with big violence, hiding under debris and pyroclastic materials high dozens metres everything was around him. We know the eruption dynamic by two letters written by Plinio the younger and sent to Tacito historian, in which the first write step by step what he saw from his accommodation in Miseno. First, he noticed a big cloud unleashed by Vesuvius and with a similar shape to a pine tree. Then, it collapsed on itself, probably because of its weight, causing a dribs and dust rain that made dark the sky as any night had done before. The younger says even that in a first moment he was with his uncle Plinio the older, but the last one, because of his insatiable curiosity, decided to take a boat and go to the Vesuvius. What Plinio the older couldn't imagine is that the geological event would become the cause of his dead. The volcanic activity lasted 48 hours and poured such a quantity of wastes that covered all the Sarno valley, many cities included, like Oplontis, Taurania, Sora, Cossa, Tora and Leucoperta. In Pompeii, only there were more than 2 thousand victims. When it was clear that the Vesuvius fury had been stopped, the emperor ordered that some senators went to the affected lands understanding in a better way the situation and the extent of the damage. Also, he ordered that two magistrates immediately began reconstruction activities, but those man, arrived to the site, intuited that the rebuilding could be possible just for partially destroyed cities. Herculaneum was excluded, because totally buried and deleted from human memory. Instead Pompeii was easily localised, because it wasn't completely covered by the casting of volcanic materials. In fact, the highest part of the forum structures emerged from the ground. Then they proceeded with the recovery of what more precious and reusable could be found: marble and bronze statues, columns, marble decorations. Similarly, the same Pompeiians survivors tried to recover their property, launching dig of tunnels and weels in proximity of their own houses. But rapidly, recover activities turned into acts of looting and profiteering. When it was clear that those activities were very dangerous, people stopped looking for treasures and Pompeii fell into the oblivion of memories and into the shadows of ground.¹

Leaving some rare finds that had not fame, only in the half of the XVIII century the tween sisters could see the light again: first Herculaneum, rediscovery in 1737 with the intent to deepen a dry weel. Then Pompeii in 1748 thanks to a farmer that, working on his plot of land in the area called civita (not by chance), found some ancient artefacts and ruins of walls.²

2. REPRODUCTIONS OF VESUVIAN VILLAS

Doubtless, the rediscovery of ancient cities, perfectly preserved in structures and furnishing, stimulated the world curiosity and produced a real "laic pilgrimage": every year thousands of visitors went to Herculaneum and Pompeii for observing what story (and ground of course) had jealously conserved. And in this way the beginning surprise, produced by a beautiful vision, turned into the birth of a new fashion: Etruscan or Pompeian style, diffused in Europe and America, were an imitation of architectures, decorations and furnishing typical of the ancient Italian civilities. Near singles environments, big courtyards and Pompeiiian ruins reproductions, have existed some historical attempts of rebuilding of Vesuvian villas.³

2.1. Private architecture: the *Villa*

From the late *republica* to the first imperial period, the Italic-roman house type of the middle-high level shows a common element: it's typical the main environments disposition along a single axe. These environments were:

- *Vestibulum*, entrance in the *domus* and directly accessible from the street.

¹ Corti 1963

² Corti 1963

³ Dahl 1955

- *Atrium*, inner court, not totally covered. The pitched roof was useful for the conservation of rainy water, that was brought in a big pool collocated in the centre of the court and at the level of the floor.
- *Tablinium*, room in which *pater familias* received their clients. It was designated to the society occasions and, for this reason, was richly decorated to reflect the economic, social and politic importance of the owner of the house.
- *Atrium tetrastylum*, real garden useful for aerating and lighting the others environments. Initially surrounded by four columns, was transformed because of the Hellenistic influx: the little *hortus* was been added or was totally been replaced by one or more columned gardens, with fountains, artificial rivers and decorations.⁴

2.2. Most important attempts of Vesuvian villas reproductions

Following a chronological order, we should start from the famous Pompejanum, a museum structure erected between 1840 and 1850 at the behest of king Ludwig I of Baviera. Placed in the beautiful location of Ashaffenburg, that held yet one of the rich residences of the king, the villa reproduced in planimetry the famous Villa of Dioscuri of Pompeii. So, only the architectonic structure was taken from the original project, but not the furnishing, because of a scandal that brought the king to abdicate. During the second world war, the museum was damaged by allies bombing and there was the necessity to activate reconstruction and restoring activities. The Pompejanum opened to visitors only in 1994. Nowadays, it's a detached home of the Munich glyptothek and works with her for the preparation of temporary exhibitions.⁵

The second exemplum that deserves mention is the big Pompeian Court, realised in the Crystal Palace of Sydenham Hill. That structure was built for the first time in London in 1851 and its name came from the materials used for its realisation: iron for the skeleton and glass for the walls. It was imagined as a big museum, because it held the universal collection of archaeological finds and reproductions of every single human era. Totally torn down and reconstructed in 1852 in Sydenham Hill, the gallery saw the addition of new courts, even the Pompeiian one. The reproduced Pompeiian *domus* was characterised by a lot of environments of which the relation of dimensions was different from the one of the original model. Even if it didn't imitate a specific villa, the Pompeian Court was a big success: organisers tried to recreate mosaical floors and walls paintings closer to the originals. Unfortunately, Crystal palace was totally destroyed by a fire in 1936.⁶

In Paris in 1858 was inaugurated the Maison Pompeienne by the Prince Napoleon, cousin of the famous emperor. Meeting location preferred by talented youngers artists, it was built near a medieval castle, along the Avenue Montagne. But really soon, the prince grew tired and decided to sell the villa: after a series of events and several owners, the Maison Pompeienne was demolished in 1894 for the construction of new buildings. We cannot omit that in spite of the choice to take as a model the famous Villa of Diomede, the architect in charge of the project had to face some situations that produced changes compared to the original plane: for exemplum, a big porch entrance was realised for the concierge; moreover, the *atrium* was totally glassed, preventing damages caused by the bad weather. In this space was collocated the big bust of Napoleon the I, while others members of the Bonaparte family busts took place in the *tablinium*. Wall paintings, realised by Sebastien Cornu, constituted a revisiting of the Pompeiian one. The furnishing followed the emperor style. Pompeiian fashion flooded over the ocean and reached the Bostonian merchant and architect Franklin Webster Smith, who decided to realise a museum, perfect copy of Domus of Pansa situated in Pompeii. In the early years of the twentieth century, Saratoga district of New York saw the birth, thanks to a man of a great learning, of the famous Pompeia. The structure, that in Smith's opinion would give to the visitors the impression of belonging to a roman aristocratic man, was composed in this way: the

⁴ Bozzoni, Franchetti Pardo, Ortolani, Viscogliosi 2006

⁵ Dahl 1955

⁶ Dahl 1955

fauces, that represented the entrance, were decorated by a mosaical floor in which was obtained the writing “*salve*”, Latin word who demonstrated a big sense of hospitality of villa’s owners; near the reception, there was another mosaical floor well known in the roman world, the “*cave canem*” one, that introduced in the open and porched atrium. The furnishing, from sofas to chairs, from tables to candelabra, were a faithful reproduction of Pompeiian and Herculaneum finds and displayed in the archaeological museum of Naples. The *tablinium* had been set in order to conserve funerary urns of fathers and familiar archive, including original papyrus rolls reproductions (originals were found in Villa of papyri in Herculaneum); It did not lack a reading room, adorned by a big wall painting that represented the greatness of Rome during Costantino empire. Unfortunately, it was seriously damaged by a fire that struck the museum in 1926. The structure, from an ornamental and decorative point of view, didn’t imitate only to the Pansa *domus*, but combined several elements taken from different residential buildings of the two cities buried by the Vesuvian eruption of 79 a.C. As a museum, the Pompeia Saratoga held countless archaeological finds, as well as reproductions that the same Smith bought, including statues, mosaical floors and wall paintings.⁷

2.3. The case of Getty Villa

President and partner of one of the biggest oil companies of the world, J. Paul Getty (1892-1927) was an exceptional personality in the America of fifties. Feeling himself as an out of place and out of time man comparable to an ancient roman aristocratic or emperor, Getty decided to build in Malibù the perfect reproduction of Villa of papyri in Herculaneum, to exhibiting his archaeological finds bought during his countless travels in Italy and Europe. Of course, his surprising decision could appear as a one of the richest American man whim. Moreover, behind this choice there was the awareness that others prominent personalities of the new world had already tried to reproduce roman environments. However, the most important reason that pushed him to this big venture was his love for ancient Greek and Roman history, for archaeological treasure (not only as material objects but even as outcome of processes hidden by time) and the will to place them in an underground as similar as possible to the one in which they had found.⁸

2.3.1. The papyri Villa in Herculaneum

The villa was accidentally found in 1750 when, after the dig of a well, emerged some *opus sectile* floors. Subsequently, the king f Naples Carlo of Borbone proclaimed the beginning of systematic dig of the structure, entrusting the task of site manager to Karl Weber. The second one ordered to lifers and sentenced to death to excavate wells, narrows and darks tunnels, dangerous galleries without aeration system, but thanks to which they managed to recover ancient treasures. Villa of the Papyri, that takes her name from one of the most surprising finds (more than two thousand papyrus rolls, carbonized because of the environmental temperature during the eruption), was built in parallel to the ancient coast line. 250 metres long, it was composed by a residential district, a library, a big garden, a courtyard long 100 metres, a 66 metres long pool and a belvedere. Moreover, the villa returned a lot of artworks, including marble and bronze sculptures, mosaics, wall frescoes. Karl Weber was the first to draw a careful and detailed planimetry, in which are involved wells and galleries dug by excavators.⁹

In the following years, researchers focused on the best way to uncoil papyrus rolls and to analyse the hidden texts. Meanwhile, king Carlo has the reproductions of original artefacts made, included plaster casts of thirty-two sculptures that would be exposed in the Palacio del Buen Retiro end in the Palacio Real. After 250 years of Borbonics explorations, recent excavations focused on surrounding atrium environments, which have given mosaical floors and wall frescoes in II style (60-40 a.C.). Moreover, investigations have given the possibility to understanding that the structure hadn’t an exclusively horizontal development, but even a vertical one: lying on a hillside, the villa has been erected on several terraces, of which the surfaces proportionally decreased from the top to the bottom.¹⁰

⁷ Dahl 1955

⁸ Shelley 2011

⁹ Ciardiello 2009

¹⁰ Ciardiello 2009

2.3.2 Birth of the museum and renovation

At the time of assignment, the architect Stephen Garret, who successively became director of the museum, was perplex: he hadn't any idea how beginning his work. Scarce was information left from archaeologist about the villa that would become the reference model: just some Weber's planimetries (in which didn't appear uppers levels) and some drawing about decorations and furnishing. In spite of this, Garret ended his job and in 1974 the museum, placed on the Malibu' coast in California, opened to visitors for the first time, showing its content: archaeological finds, paintings, furnishing.¹¹ Getty Villa hadn't as a reference model just the Papyri villa, from which took the planimetry (even with some little changes, essentials to according the structure to the hillside): in fact, upper levels were divided in sectors by the historian Norman Neuemburg, who resumed elements from several Vesuvian villas. Exhibition consisted on clearly originals pieces, parts of Getty private collection, and reproductions: bronze replicas realised by the famous Neapolitan foundry Chiurazzi. The walls of the museum were decorated by marble coverings, while paintings adorned the *peristylum*. Furthermore, a false tract of roman road was build, as gardens and fountains.¹² In 1997 organisers decided to renovate the museum: all the collection was temporary transferred to the Getty Center of Brentwood and came back to home only when Getty villa reopened to the public, on January 2006. The most important change the museum had during the modernisation was about the relation with the surrounding environment: a big parking area was built and connected to the museum by a little road; this one cut the hillside on which the museum rests and the walls have been covered by using different materials set in layers to remanding to archaeological field stratifications idea.¹³ The element that links road and villa/museum entrance is a Theatre: here, a lot of spectacles (even ancient tragedies and comedies) take place; moreover, it's very beautiful seeing that the same visitors groups take a rest here, to admire the beautiful panorama. The front-scene is the west side of main part of villa. There are also big gardens in which were planted typical Mediterranean trees and flowers.¹⁴

The villa's structure hasn't had many changes. Doubtless, noteworthy is the glass wall that puts in relation atrium and inner *peristylum*: it makes reproduction closer to the original and allows to the natural light to enter in the inner rooms; furthermore, it can be closed in bad weather, providing protection to inner environments of the house. Upper levels are divided in rooms that host temporary exhibitions. Object are collocated in showcases that follow the trend of the walls. Environment are painted in dense red, blue, soft green, while corridors in yellow. These colours work as underground in which decorations in roman style have been drawn by Garth Benton and his team. The terrace houses new rooms.¹⁵

To protecting archaeological finds and artefacts from frequent earthquakes that could damage them and the structure, an antiseismic system has been designed: it includes some supports, that are able to isolate museum walls, and several isolators each one fixed to a single object.

For what concerns the object disposition in the museum, organisers decided to follow a thematic order, according to which every environment is associated to a specific topic. The atrium is, for exemplum, surrounded by six exhibition rooms, four of which (the ones at the corners) are dedicated to four materials type: bronze, glass, silver and terracotta. There are even environments dedicated to generic topics, as "gods and goddesses" or "luxury objects". Important is the Basilica, adorned with covering marbles that imitate ancient romans *domus*. To the inner *peristylum* are opened a lot of rooms in which artefacts follow topics as "the man in the past", "Women and children" and under-topics like "the war", "the social life", "the man and his work", "the symposium" and "the politic life". Sometimes, in spite of the confusion generated by the

¹¹ Moltesen 2007

¹² Shelley 2011

¹³ Moltesen 2007

¹⁴ Moltesen 2007

¹⁵ Moltesen 2007

chosen thematical order that connects objects chronologically separated, it appears that visitors appreciate it.¹⁶

In general, temporary and permanent exhibitions curators tried to permeate architecture, richly adorned as ancient roman style ruled, and artefacts, that are housed in the same museum.¹⁷

3. CONCLUSIONS

I've briefly described five attempts of reproduction of Vesuvian villas, realised in a period of time of 150 years in places far away each other and commissioned by different personalities in social backgrounds.

Pompejanum	Baviera (Germany)	King Ludwig I	1840-1850
Crystal palace	Sydenham Hill (Great Britain)		1851
Maison Pompeienne	Paris (France)	Prince Napoleon	2 nd half of XIX century
Pompeia	New York (USA)	Mr Smith	1 st half of XX century
Getty's villa	California (USA)	J. Paul Getty	1974 and 2006

Which one could be the common element? Obviously, Pompeii and Herculaneum. Two big cities buried by Vesuvian eruption of 79 a.C. and brought to the light only in the half of eighteenth century. Their find produced in the world population the desire to know more things about romans: how did they live, what did they do in their life, what were their costumes. Romans, till the XVIII century, was known by monuments, art, architecture, objects, literature; but nothing equalised them as the discovery of an ancient cities fixed in time. Archaeologists, visitors and people had had for the first time the possibility to make a space trip and to return to the 1st century after Christ. And for all those who couldn't travel, there were Pompejanum, Crystal Palace, Pompeia and Getty's villa: in these places, visitors could tread mosaic floors, could see wall paintings, could touch ancient roman furnishing. Could live, just for a day, as a roman did.



Figure 1. The west porch and entrance to the Getty museum seen from the outdoor theater.¹⁸

¹⁶ Moltesen 2007

¹⁷ Moltesen 2007



Figure 2: The atrium with its impluvium open to the sky, windows to the galleries on the upper floor and doors to the peristyle.¹⁹



Figure 3: Inner peristyle with ancient bronze sculptures reproductions and a little pool.²⁰



Figure 4: outdoor peristyle, adorned with typical Mediterranean plants, fountains and sculptures.²¹

¹⁸ Moltesen 2007

¹⁹ Moltesen 2007

²⁰ <http://www.getty.edu/visit/villa/architecture.html>

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²¹ <http://www.getty.edu/visit/villa/architecture.html>

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Reproduction of Vesuvian Villas

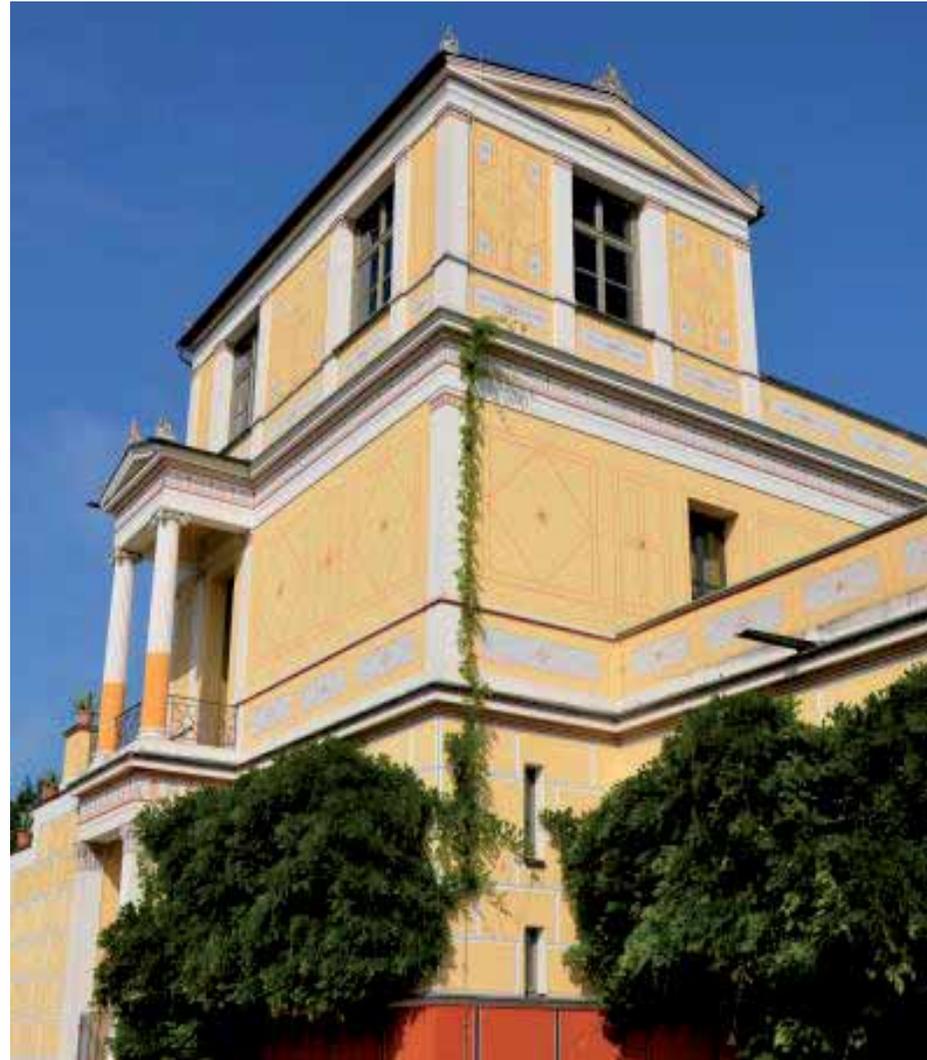
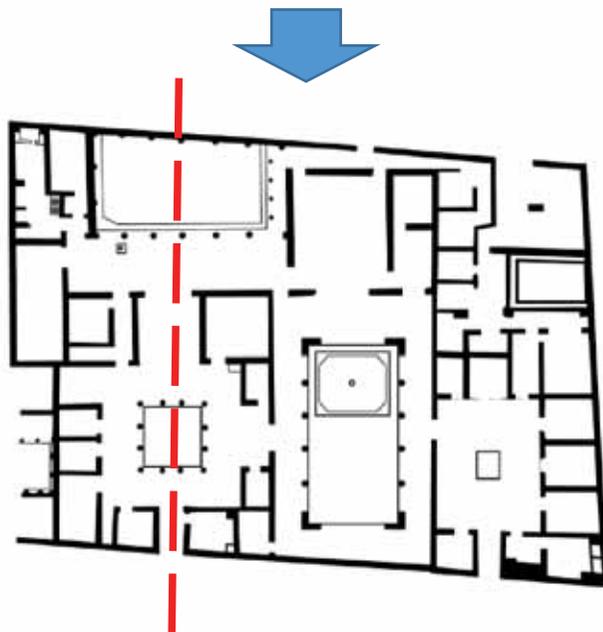


24 Sept. 2016

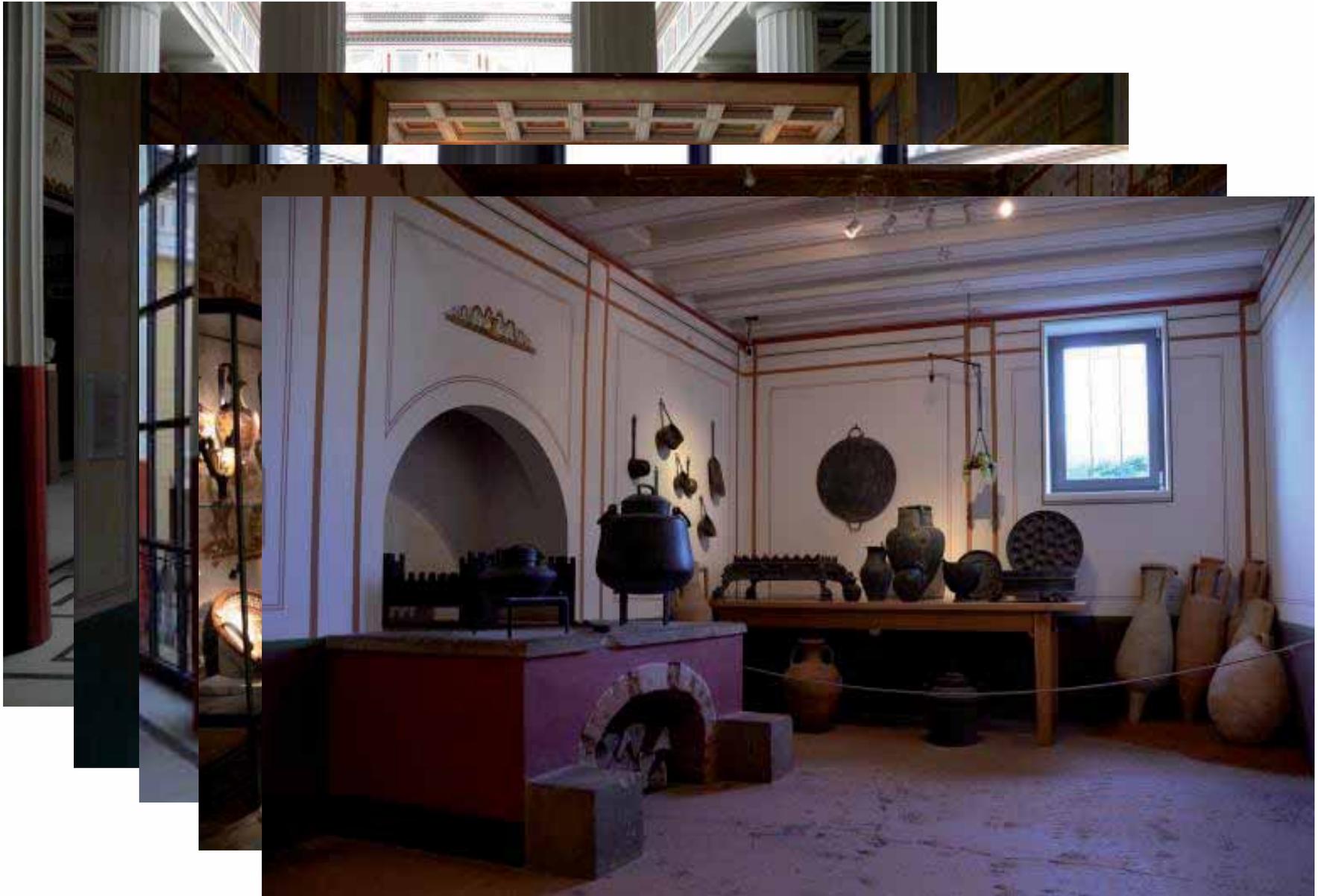
Hotel del Sole, Naples

Pompejanum

- 1840-1850
- Ashffenburg
- King Ludwig I
- Function: museum
- Domus of Dioscurs, Pompei



Pompejanum

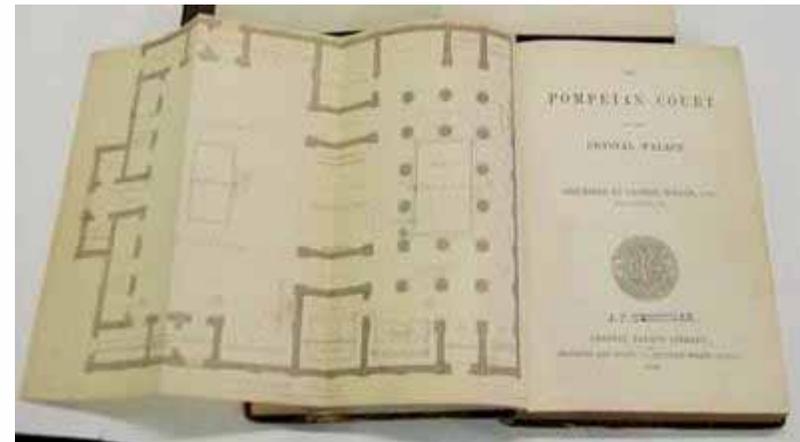


Crystal palace



www.crystalpalacemuseum.org.uk

- 1851
- London → Sydenham Hill
- Prince Albert
- Function: Great exhibition
- Added pompeian Court



www.pinterest.com

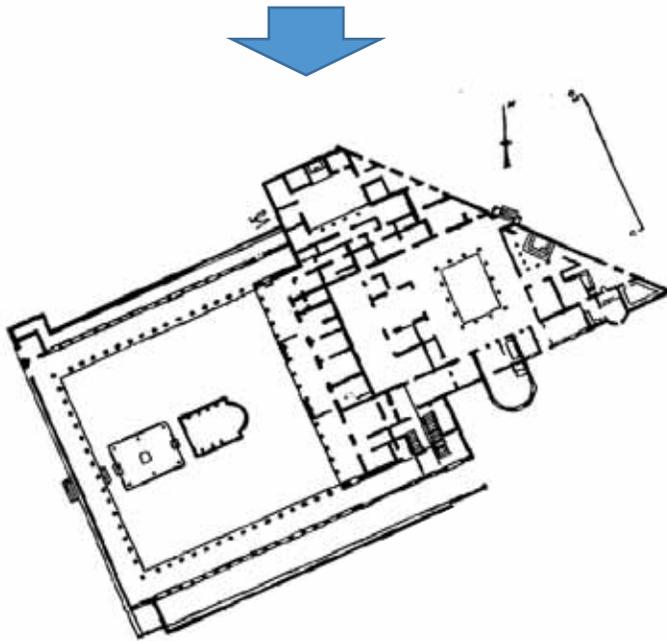
Crystal Palace



sydenham.org.uk

Maison Pompéienne

- 2^o half of XIX century
- Prince Napoleon
- Paris
- Function: temporary house
- Domus of Diomede



www.pompeionline.net



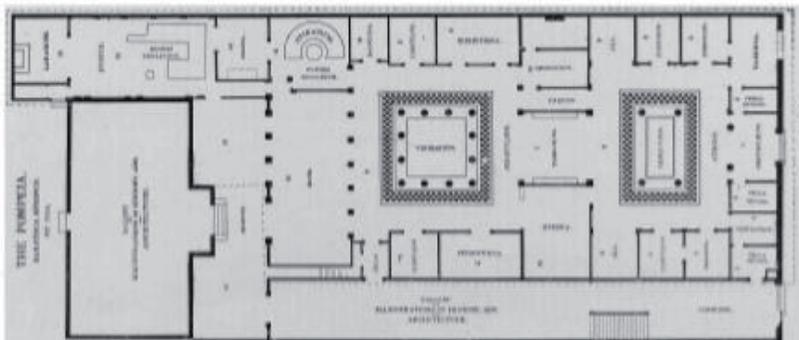
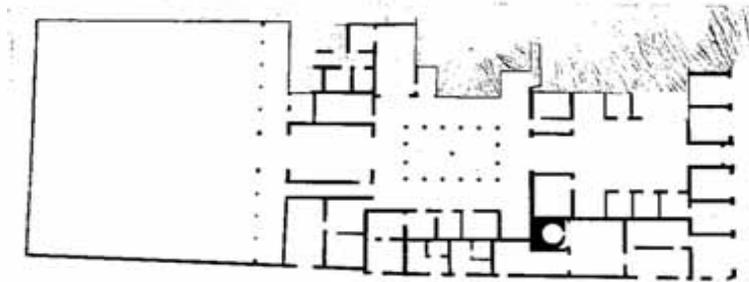
www.pinterest.com

Maison Pompeien



Pompeia Saratoga Springs

- Beginning of XX century
- Mr Smith
- New York
- Function: museum
- Domus of Pansa



pompei.sns.it

W.R.BRADSHAW: «the pompeia» at Saratoga, in The Deciratr and Furnisher, vol 16, n°5 (Aug 1890);

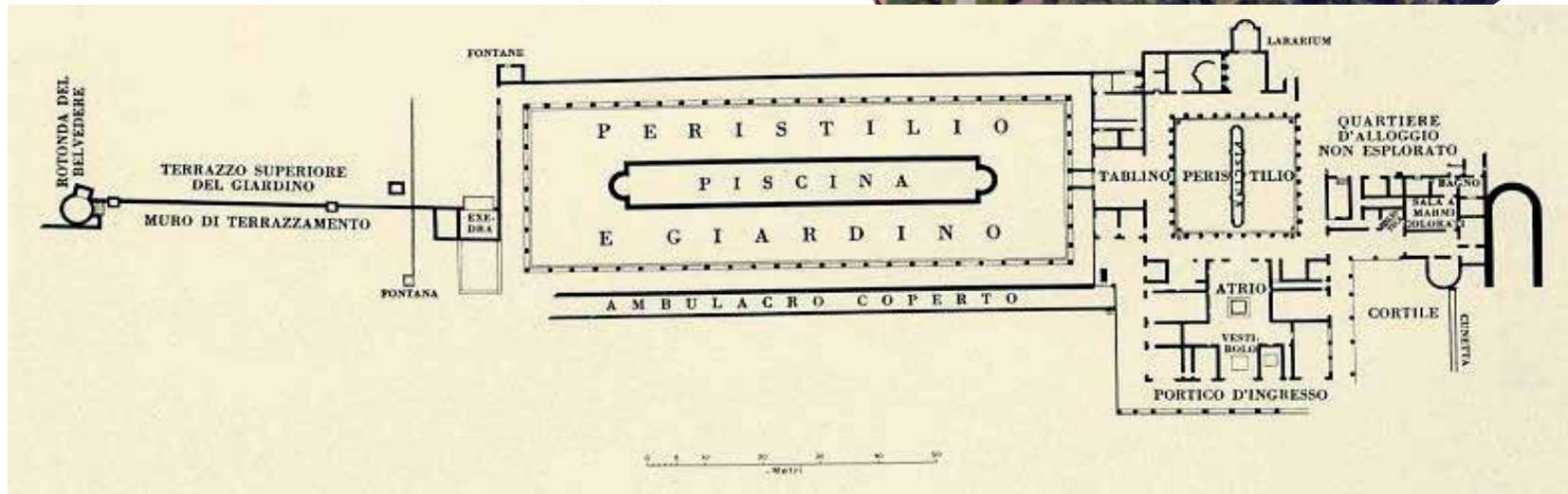
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Pompeia Saratoga Springs

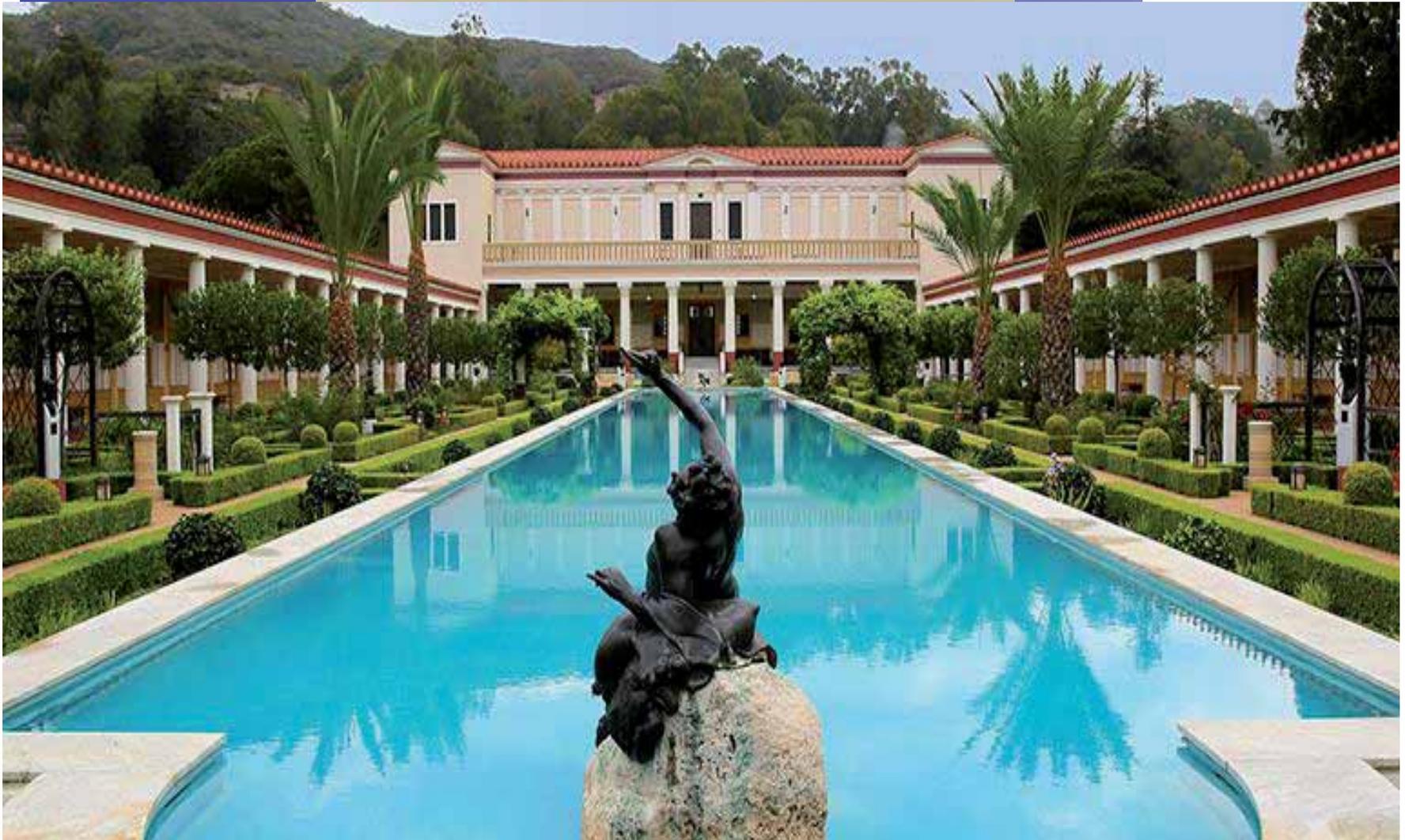


Getty's Villa

- 1974 and 2004
- J. Paul Getty
- Malibù
- Function: museum
- Villa of Papyri



Getty's Villa



Conclusions

Pompejanum

Baviera (Germany)

King Ludwig I

1840-1850

Crystal palace

Sydenham Hill (Great Britain)

Prince Albert

1851

Maison Pompeienne

Paris (France)

Prince Napoleon

2nd half of XIX century

Pompeia

New York (USA)

Mr Smith

1st half of XX century

Getty's villa

California (USA)

J. Paul Getty

1974 and 2006



Pompei